

Some years ago Archivists Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young attempted to develop an appraisal methodology that quantified various selection factors.¹ While the weighting process failed, the questions remain valid. Think of the appraisal process as a series of questions that must be answered by the person(s) looking at the materials being evaluated. Below is the list of questions adapted from Boles and Young:

1) How important is this information?

- ▶ How, when, and where was it created?
- ▶ What does it tell us that we didn't know?
- ▶ How complete a story does it tell?
- ▶ Does it duplicate what we already have and know?
- ▶ Does it strengthen the context of information we already have?
- ▶ Is it legible, usable, and understandable?
- ▶ Can we exhibit it?
- ▶ Are there access or copyright restrictions?
- ▶ Who is likely to use it?

2) How much is it going to cost us to keep it?

- ▶ Do we have the time and people to process it?
- ▶ Do our people have the necessary knowledge or skills to process it?
- ▶ Will it require special storage equipment?
- ▶ Do we have/can we afford the supplies necessary for processing?
- ▶ How much preservation work will be necessary?
- ▶ Will it require (much more expensive) conservation work?
- ▶ Do we have the staff to make it available?
- ▶ Will it require special equipment to make it available?

3) What (and who) is affected if we keep it?

- ▶ Will taking these materials affect or change our collecting emphasis/policy?
- ▶ Will taking these materials mean that we cannot devote the time or resources to something else we should be doing?
- ▶ Will taking them change the way people feel about our organization?
- ▶ Do these materials strengthen our educational or exhibit potential?

¹ "Exploring the Black Box," *American Archivist*, xxxviii, #2 (Spring, 1985).